

HHBC Pre-Game Talk 21/12/2024

Board 26 (from 14/12/2024)

Dealer: E

Vulnerability: All

East-West hold the following hands →

West	V	East	D	V
♠ K 4		♠ 9 8 5 3		
♥ K 10 7 5		♥ A Q J 9 2		
♦ 5 2		♦ K		
♣ J 10 7 3 2		♣ A K 9		

Looking at the two hands, you might think it is reasonable to get to a 4H contract.

But how do you get there?

Assuming the opponents always pass, one way is simply to open 1H as East and, when West gives a simple raise of 2H, jump up to a contract of 4H. (If your partnership plays Bergen raises, West may choose to use that convention instead.)

But there's a problem with this.

While East has 17 HCP and a singleton, it's important to realise that East does not have 20 total points (including the three distribution points for their singleton).

We can't count our King of Diamonds AND our singleton because they are one and the same! In other words, our King of Diamonds may be as good as a low diamond card if partner doesn't hold the Ace or Queen. (And in this hand, they don't!)

So what should we do? (Assuming the auction is 1H - 2H - ?

Firstly, let's consider passing. Can this be right?

While three of our points are in diamonds, our hand is still worth 17 points. So if partner is raising with 8 or 9 points, we will miss a game if we pass.

So we shouldn't pass. And bashing 4H is not very scientific.

Another option might be to bid 3H. However, this bid needs discussion with your partner about what it means. Does it promise extra values? Or does it just show an extra heart? If the former, West should then raise to 4H. If the latter, a different approach is needed.

This is where *long-suit trials* may be of use.

A long-suit trial is a type of invite to game after a major fit has been found after 1H - 2H or 1S - 2S. If opener then bids a new suit, they show four cards in that suit and around 16-18 HCP.

The benefit of bidding a long-suit trial is to say, "Hey partner, I've got a bit extra and I'm looking for game. I have this other four-card suit; will this help us bid to game?"

If the responder holds EITHER a double-fit OR a maximum (8-9 HCP) hand, they should bid

game. Otherwise, they should reject the invite by bidding 3H or 3S (whichever is your agreed major).

On this hand, after 1H - 2H, East can consider bidding 2S to show that they have four spades in the suit and 16-18 HCP. After this, West can comfortably bid to game since they have a maximum hand - it may be 'only' 7 HCP but they hold an extra hearts which is worth at least another point!

Getting to game on this hand will pick up a healthy +620, +650 or even +680 points!

Here's the full hand:

North		V		
♠ Q 7 6				
♥ 6				
♦ J 9 7 6 4				
♣ Q 6 5 4				
West	V	East	D	V
♠ K 4		♠ 9 8 5 3		
♥ K 10 7 5		♥ A Q J 9 2		
♦ 5 2		♦ K		
♣ J 10 7 3 2		♣ A K 9		
South		V	HCPs	
♠ A J 10 2			5	
♥ 8 4 3			7 17	
♦ A Q 10 8 3			11	
♣ 8				